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Fact Sheet

For Background Use Only
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THE SOVIET UNION SPEAKS ON AFRICA

On African Socialism. In the Communist view there is but one socialism, the so-called "scientific" socialism, which is communism. Although there are many paths to reach it, communism is the only goal of socialism. Thus African and Arab socialism are referred to as stepping stones toward achieving, with Soviet assistance, a Communist state. The Soviet Union expresses it as follows:

"In many liberated countries, as was said before, various concepts of social development are spreading and appear under the name 'African Socialism,' 'Arab Socialism' etc. All these concepts of socialism are different from each other and for that reason relations with them should be differentiated.

In the opinion of the African advocates of socialism, scientific socialism does not suit the African reality; the people of Africa should build their own African socialism. The appearance of such views is not only a result of immaturity of social relations but also of the influence of anti-Communist propaganda and the spread of pseudosocialist ideas of 'democratic socialism.' For all the diffusiveness and vagueness of 'African socialism' it is possible to determine several of its features: a lack of understanding that socialism is incompatible with private capitalist ownership of the means of production and the false notion that socialism is a society of petty producers where every man has his own means of production...

Communists not only do not deny the objective necessity of various roads to socialism but actually originated that idea. Marxism-Leninism teaches that socialism occurs in such forms as are organically linked with all elements of national existence. The peoples of Africa will go along their own road to socialism. However there can be no 'European,' 'African' or any other type of socialism. Social development from capitalism to socialism is a single historical universal process. Consequently we cannot speak of 'African socialism' but about the particular path of the African people toward socialism as a whole."

Kommunist (Theoretical journal of the CPSU, Moscow), #4, April 1963

"Countries which have won their freedom will proceed to Socialism along tried and tested paths and along paths discovered by the popular movement. There are no grounds therefore for counterposing 'African Socialism' to scientific Socialism, if by 'African Socialism' we mean the specific ways and means of the transition to Socialism in keeping with African reality.

"This, alone correct, understanding of the question is constantly gaining ground in Africa. Take, for example, the evolution of opinion in the Convention Peoples Party of Ghana. The party rules adopted shortly after the winning of independence spoke of 'African Socialism' as the main goal. Over the following years a lively discussion about Socialism was conducted through the pages of Ghanaian newspapers. In a speech made on April 22, 1961, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah spoke no longer of 'African Socialism' but of Socialism in general, saying that Socialism 'assumes the public ownership of the means of production.'* The new CPP programme adopted in 1962 acknowledges that its ideology 'is based on scientific socialism.'** In a talk with the author of this article on December 8, 1962, Dr. Nkrumah said that 'there is only one socialism' as a particular system of social production.'

*Building a Socialist State. Address by Dr. Nkrumah, President of the Republic of Ghana, to CPP Study Group, April 22, 1961

**Programme of the Convention Peoples Party. For Work and Happiness, Accra, 1962, p.7

'On African Socialism,' Prof. I.I. Potekhin Director of African Institute, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, in International Affairs (Journal of the Communist 'Society for the Diffusion of Political and Scientific Knowledge,' Moscow), #1, 1963

The Communists must continually fight the belief that Africans have little in common with the Soviet Union:

"A completely erroneous counterposing of scientific Socialist theory to 'African Socialism' has gained wide currency among African Socialists; scientific socialism is not suitable for African reality, we shall build our own African Socialism, is what they say.

What is 'African Socialism'? No single, complete theory of this concept exists. Each individual advocate of 'African Socialism' has his own ideas about it and gives a different meaning to this concept, but they are all united by a common desire: to abolish the exploitation of man by man. Yet it is precisely this which is the main content of scientific Socialism. Therefore, on this point, the main one, there is no divergency of views between the advocates of scientific and 'African' Socialism."

Ibid.

However erroneous the concept of African socialism in the Soviet view, it is treated as a potential step toward communism:

"Equally, 'African Socialism' is not to be dismissed out of hand. It embraces genuine attempts by progressive people to find ways of transition to socialism which accord with the special conditions of

Africa. But at the same time the theory of 'African Socialism' is also used as a means to deceive the working masses in the interests of capitalist development."

Prof. Potekhin, Peoples of Asia and Africa,
#1, 1962

On National Democracy. The Communist goal of seizing power in each country demands unorthodox tactics in Africa where there is no traditional communist power base of "sufficiently well organized working class and peasantry prepared to accept the working class leadership and a Marxist-Leninist Party." Not only is there no leadership for the so-called working classes, there is no class structure of exploited and exploiter and no proletariat which Communists postulate as the justification for revolutionary action to bring about a Communist state. As a substitute, Soviet communism calls for national democracies or ruling coalitions of radical groups. Such governmental structures can most easily be converted to Communism once cadres are trained.

"An important factor in carrying out the urgent revolutionary tasks is the training of cadres dedicated to the people. The problem of cadres in the countries we are discussing has two aspects; first, there is an acute shortage of trained personnel in all spheres of endeavor; second the state apparatus is still honey-combed with reactionaries and some office holders are corrupt. The revolutionary forces, therefore consider it their prime duty to train experts devoted to their people and capable of running the machinery of state, managing the economy and taking charge of education and culture."

"National Democracy -- Key to Social Progress,"
A. Sobolev, World Marxist Review, Feb. 1963

On African Unity, Arab Unity. Soviet writers emphasize that unity is desirable not as an end in itself but as a means of combating colonialism: "... only unity and solidarity on an anti-imperialist and democratic basis can help to spread and intensify the national liberation movements of peoples." After the founding of the Organization of African Unity, Khrushchev sounded the key Soviet view, namely, African unity is praiseworthy if directed against imperialism and if it is ready to unite with international fronts:

"An active struggle in the defense of peace, for national liberation and against colonialism in all its forms and manifestations must throw wide bridges from continent to continent, unite and draw together the peoples of all races and nationalities, religious beliefs and political convictions."

Pravda, July 25, 1963

Khrushchev reiterated the Soviet view that international unity based on class is the essential unity for communism in an address to Aswan dam workers which excited considerable adverse Arab comment:

"Certain speakers have addressed us here. I have listened to their words: We are Arabs, we are Arabs, unite, Arabs, and so on. If you take this position it might seem that we Russians have nothing to do here among you Arabs; should we pack up and go home? We are not Arabs. Our teacher and leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, also appealed for unity -- not on a national basis, however, but on a labor and class basis!"

Ibid, May 18, 1964

On Pan-Africanism. Antony Buzek, former Czechoslovak News service official now living in London, reported that news agencies of Communist Europe were under orders to try to discourage pan-African movements while seeming to be sympathetic with them, according to Der Kurier, Vienna, March 26, 1962. Pan-Africanism has "its weak sides, which can give rise to extreme forms of nationalism" according to Prof. Potekhin. As an "instrument of national egoism and national exclusiveness" it might work against Soviet influence in African institutions. However, as with African unity, pan-Africanism is laudable if it follows the Soviet prescription:

"Some understand pan-Africanism as a solidarity of African peoples in the fight against imperialism for the destruction of the consequences of colonialism and for economic and social progress. Thus understood, pan-Africanism deserves every support of the forces of progress. The others regard pan-Africanism as the opposition of peoples of black race to peoples of white race. Such an interpretation is advantageous only to the imperialists, the enemies of the peoples of Africa."

"Pan-Africanism and the Struggle of Two Ideologies," Prof. Potekhin, Kommunist, #1, January 1964

"These pro-imperialist circles, taking refuge in talk about "genuine African socialism" try to emasculate the class content of the proletarian struggle and to compel the African working class to betray the principles of proletarian internationalism. They seek to drag into African workers' movement the narrow nationalist slogan that "all Africans are brothers."

Aziya i Afrika Segodnya (Asia and Africa Today) #12, 1961

On Overthrowing Independent African Governments. Bourgeois national leaders may be tolerated in the early stages of Communist political developments:

"It is known that the majority of new national states of Africa and Asia are headed by bourgeois political leaders who usually take a position under a nationalistic flag... Nevertheless Lenin considered it natural that at the beginning of any national movement the bourgeoisie plays the role of the leading force..."

After independence when the "imperialists" are out of the way, the bourgeois leaders may be overthrown:

"In case the national bourgeoisie refuses to cooperate with the progressive forces, the working class [the Communists] and its party may be forced, in the interests of the nation, to remove the bourgeoisie from authority and to form a people's democratic state."

Narody Asii i Afrika (Peoples of Asia and Africa) #1, 1963

Or a civil war may be called for:

"In some instances, when social contradictions are particularly exacerbated, the class war and the national liberation movement may develop into revolutionary wars. To recognize that such wars are just and lawful is not to contradict the principle of peaceful coexistence."

Kommunist, (Moscow) #13, 1960

Note: All underlinings have been added.